

## **Teaching 'religion' in public education: changing understandings, historical premises, and contemporary strategies**

This project is about the ways 'religion' is handled in public education, introducing a historical and comparative perspective to the contemporary debates.

### **About the Project**

What are children supposed to learn, if they learn (from / about / or simply 'a') religion? Since teaching 'religion(s)' instead of Christian catechesis first became possible in the context of the modern criticism of religion, many and varied debates about the role of religion in public education developed.

Regardless of the syllabus: How to understand religion, what counts as religion and what is excluded, what is relevant knowledge, and what the learning outcomes are supposed to cover are questions highly disputed throughout the last 150 years. In the institutionalised context of public education, religion is not just a topic: It is a strategic decision. Having to take legal, political, academic, theological, critical and popular understandings of religion into account, public education about 'religion' both reflects and reshapes the public perception of religion.

### **Objectives**

The project aims on adding a historical perspective to contemporary debates on religion in public education, and focuses on Switzerland and Norway. The aim is to identify major conceptual impacts on the debates since the late 19th century, to monitor changes in the curricula and syllabuses, and compare the two countries respective educational policies. While the project is historical in scope and outlook, the identification of critical constellations in the formation and interaction of public and popular understandings of religion can supplement a cultural studies based framework to educating about religion. The results of the project are used in the development of instructional material for teacher education.

### **Cooperation**

This project is realised in cooperation with the University of Teacher Education, Fribourg (CH).